

First-Year Library Research Sessions: Information Literacy & Assessment in Action



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Abstract:

This poster examines the library research sessions integrated into nearly 400 sections of the first-year writing course at a public, four-year institution. In these sessions, first-year students explore the research process through a combination of activities, discussions, and resource demonstrations. A one-sentence survey provided to students shows they leave these sessions with enhanced understanding of the research process, increased confidence in their ability to find and access relevant library resources, and a higher level of comfort with library spaces and library instructors. This poster explores the large-scale student learning assessment process, which could be adapted for use at other institutions.

About ENGL 101 library research sessions:

- English 101 (ENGL 101) serves as the **basic intro to writing course at UMD**.
- ENGL 101 students visit McKeldin Library at least once** for an in-person information literacy - research session.
- Research sessions are **integrated into the standard ENGL 101 syllabus**.
- This is the **largest library instruction program in UMD Libraries**.
- Over **85% of ENGL 101 sections schedule a research session** with the library, and **15% of those sections request an additional follow-up session** or workshop.
- Instruction is **split amongst a team of instructors** including librarians, graduate assistants, and UMD Libraries’ Research & Teaching Fellows.
- The standard **lesson plans are tailored to the standard ENGL 101 syllabus**, building on the research skills necessary to succeed in the assignments.

Semester	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Summer 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019
ENGL 101 class sections offered	132	101	10	134	111
ENGL 101 library research sessions taught	113	85	7	114	96 (scheduled)
ENGL 101 follow-up library sessions	15	13	0	14	14 (scheduled)
Total first-year students reached	2,147	1,615	133	2,166	1,824 (potentially)
ENGL 101 library instructors	10	15	4	8	15

Inside a research session:

- Learning outcomes for ENGL 101 sessions are **informed by the ENGL 101 syllabus, assignments, the University Libraries’ Learning Outcomes**, and the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education*.
- Teaching & Learning Services (TLS) **develops standard lesson plans for library research sessions** for both 50 and 75 min. sessions. Activities are highlighted below



Introducing the library

- Instructors introduce UMD Library services and spaces and **identify multiple ways students can get research assistance in the library**.
- Our goal is to frame the library as a welcoming space for students and ensure that they have awareness and access to library services.



What is Research? Icebreaker

- In small groups, students **discuss times they needed to do research in their personal lives**.
- Our goal is to illustrate how the skills students use all the time to find and evaluate information align with academic research skills.



Research Database Demonstrations

- Students **offer example search keywords and follow along with instructor demo**. Laptops are provided.
- Our goal is to introduce effective search strategies, actively engage students in the demos, and tailor the content to be relevant for that specific group of students.



Brainstorming Activity

- In small groups, students examine their topic asking:
 - What?** List synonyms, sub-topics, and related topics or events.
 - Who?** Brainstorm stakeholders for this issue, including individuals, communities, institutions, etc.
 - How?** Note ways that topic impacts the stakeholders culturally, politically, economically, physically, etc.
 - Why?** Explain why this topic merits discussion.
- Our goal is for students to think critically about the circumstances and stakeholders surrounding their research topics to create specific research questions.



Evaluating Authority Activity

- Students evaluate various sources asking:
 - Who is the author?** What are their qualifications?
 - What is the publication?**
 - What type of source is this?**
 - Is this source credible?** Why or why not?
 - How would you use this for ENGL 101?**
- Instructors create thematic modules of 4-5 sources
 - Scholarly, popular, government, and “wild cards.”
- Our goal is for students to engage critically with information.

Assessment Workflow:

One-sentence exit survey

- Administered through Qualtrics at the end of class.
- Students answer, “How did your questions about research change during this session?” and are asked to identify their library instructors.

Compile data in shared spreadsheet with rubric

- TLS compiles student responses and assessment rubric, based on ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy*, into a shared Google Sheet.

Assessment Norming Meeting

- Instructors meet to review the assessment rubric and code approx. 25 responses together, adding examples to the rubric.
- Each response is assigned to one disposition in the rubric with optional “Other” designations.

Independent coding with rubric

- Instructors individually code responses from their sections on their own time.

Assessment Workshop

- Scheduled time to finish coding alongside other instructors.
- Instructors discuss any responses flagged difficult to categorize.

Individual Analysis

- Individual instructors are encouraged to reflect on and consider student responses to improve future instruction sessions.

Programmatic Analysis

- Totals are added up to allow TLS librarians to see which skills are resonating with students and which areas need to be emphasized more.
- Results consistently indicate that a large number of students express comfort with their library instructors, spaces, and services.

Reporting

- Assessment results are included in the University Libraries Learning Outcomes report, which is reviewed by the Provost’s Office.

Learning Outcomes, Handouts, and References: Please visit: <http://go.umd.edu/fyec19> (URL is case-sensitive)

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